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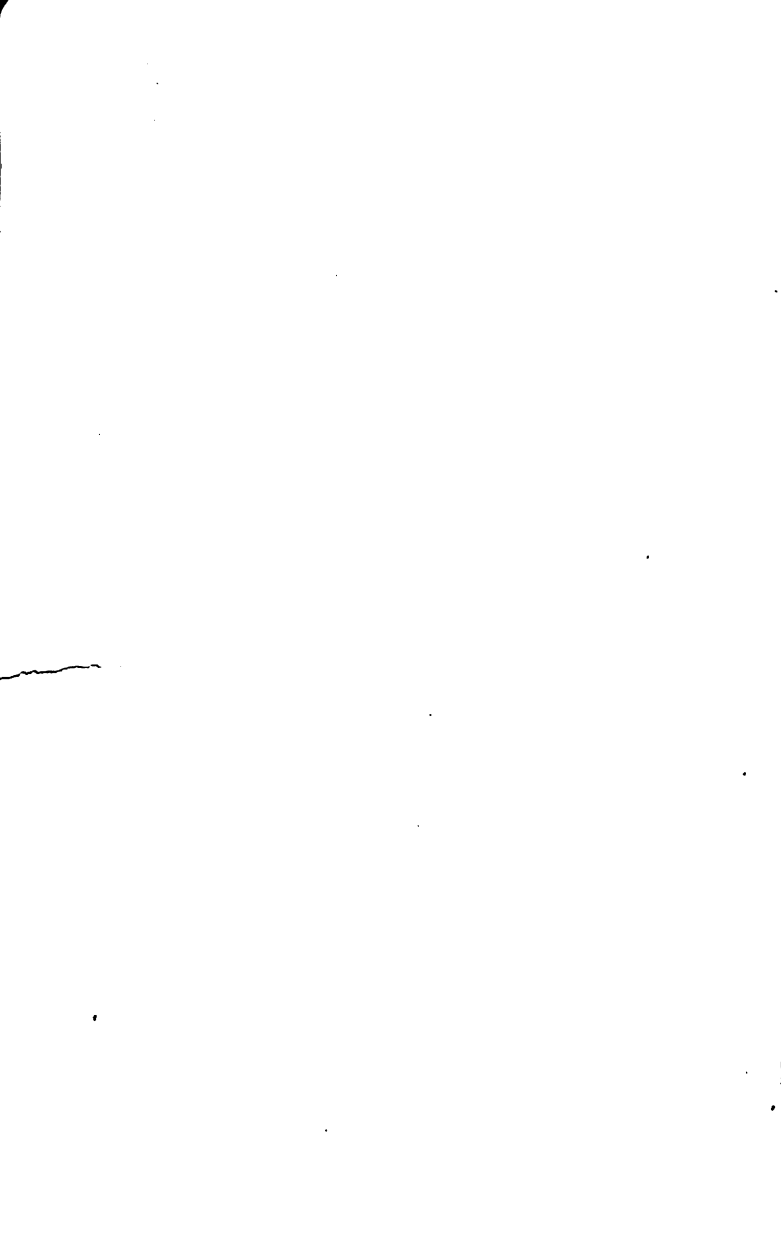
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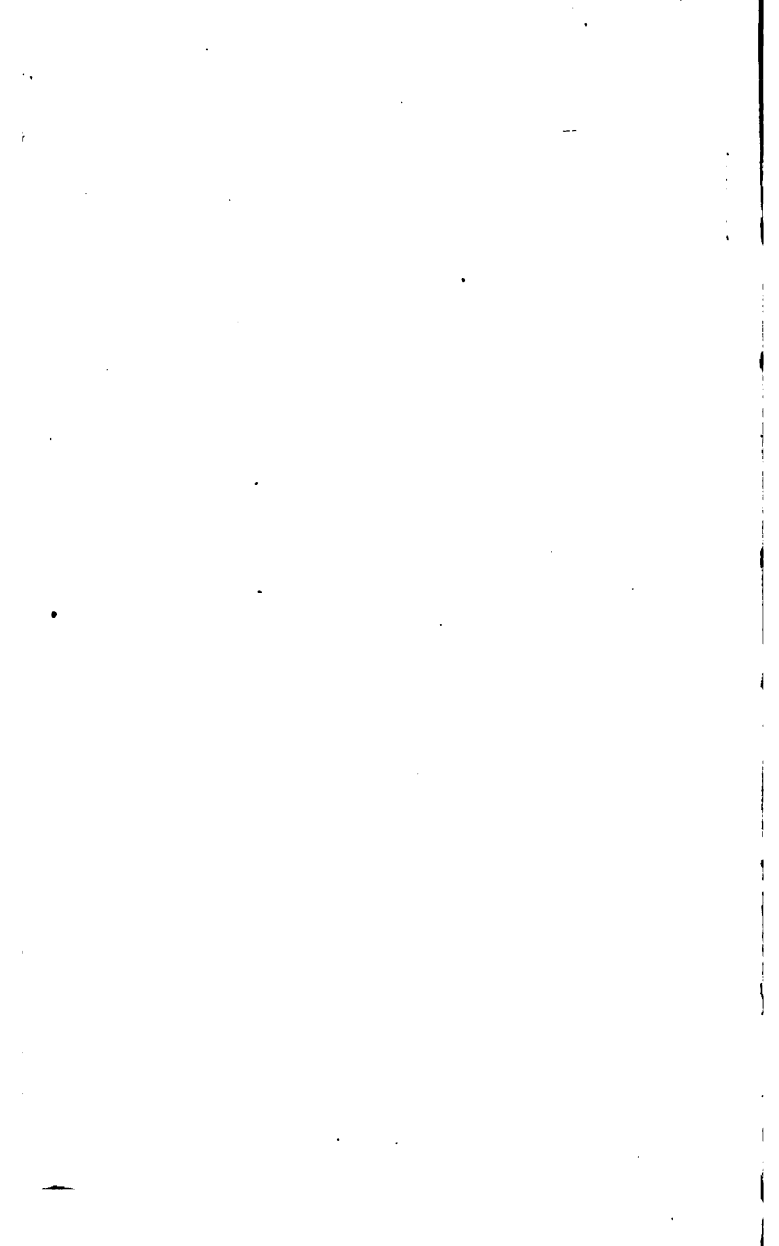


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**THE DOOR OF DREAMS**



# THE DOOR OF DREAMS

BY

JESSIE B. RITTENHOUSE

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"THE LITTLE BOOK OF MODERN VERSE"

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AMERICAN POETS"



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*Published February 1918*

NOT FOR  
CIRCULATION  
PUBLISHED



*I often passed the Door of Dreams  
But never stepped inside,  
Though sometimes, with surprise, I saw  
The door was open wide.*

*I might have gone forever by,  
As I had done before,  
But one day, when I passed, I saw  
You standing in the door.*

Along to the ... Feb. 16/18.



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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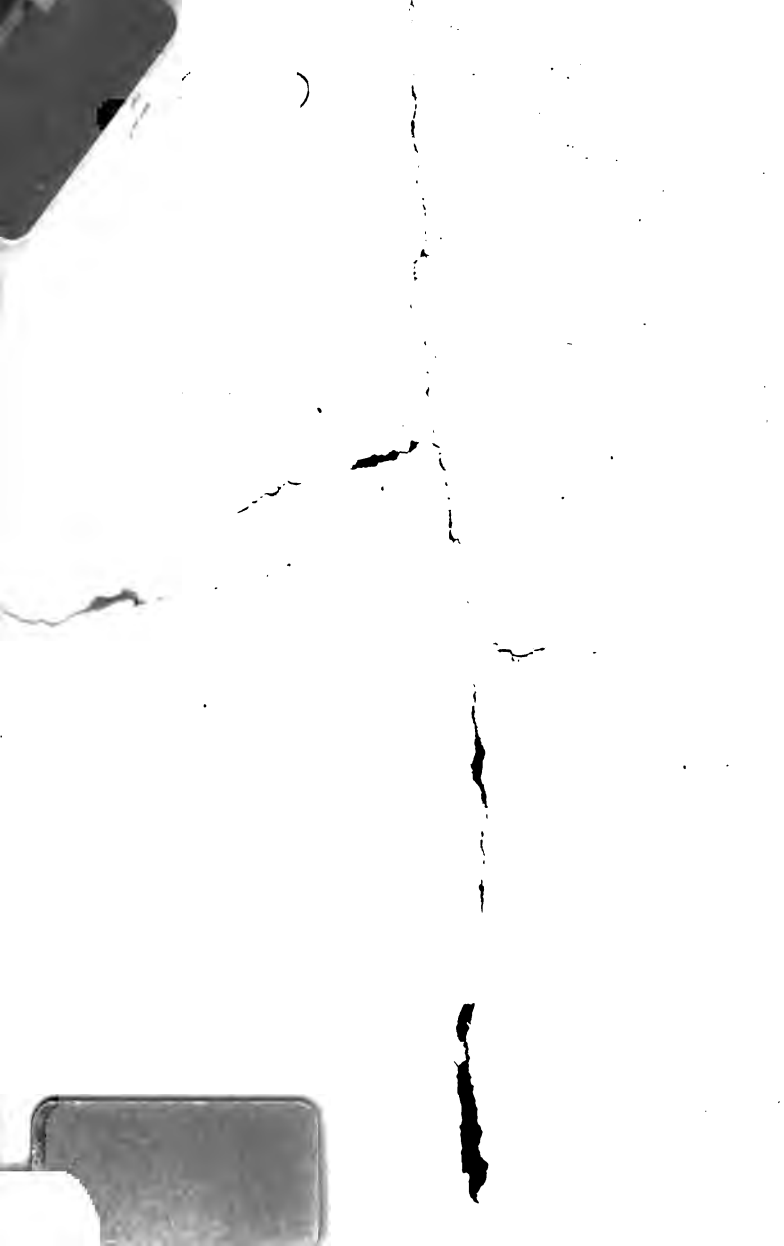
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**THE DOOR OF DREAMS**



# THE DOOR OF DREAMS

## DEBT

MY debt to you, Belovéd,  
Is one I cannot pay  
In any coin of any realm  
On any reckoning day ;

For where is he shall figure  
The debt, when all is said,  
To one who makes you dream again  
When all the dreams were dead ?

Or where is the appraiser  
Who shall the claim compute,  
Of one who makes you sing again  
When all the songs were mute ?

## APART

AH, now that I have loved you,  
I can no longer go  
Across the wide, eternal sea  
When spring winds blow ;

I cannot look on Como  
When the moon drifts through the air  
And all the rapt, still mountains  
Stand by, as if aware ;

I cannot watch the fishermen,  
Home in the early day,  
Spread all their dripping nets to dry  
By blue Salerno Bay, —

I cannot look on Italy  
For, if we are apart,  
The pang of all her loveliness  
Would break my heart !

## SILENCE

O MANY and vain, Belovéd,  
The words I spoke to you  
In those first wondering hours  
When love was new!

Now we have wandered together  
Into a mystic land,  
Now we are silent, Belovéd,  
Because we understand.

## WORDS

I WEAVE you, dear, when you are far,  
Words fairer than all things that are:  
Words fairer than the light that falls  
At night in Rome on ruined walls;  
Words fairer than an Alpine Spring  
When all the dawn is glistening;  
Words fairer than the petals shed  
From the pomegranate's blossom red.

And all these words, in dreams apart,  
Keep a still wonder in my heart,  
And every night they carry me  
Out on a tide of ecstasy,  
And every day they bring me back  
Along the same enchanted track,  
Until that one day when you come,  
And our eyes meet— and I am dumb!

## LOSS

ONCE was the need of you  
A pain too great to bear,  
And all my heart went calling you  
In work and song and prayer.

But now dull time has brought  
A sadder, stranger lot —  
That I should look upon the day  
And find I need you not.

## FROST IN SPRING

OH, had it been in Autumn, when all is spent and  
sere,

That the first numb chill crept on us, with its  
ghostly hint of fear,

I had borne to see love go, with things detached and  
frail,

Swept outward with the blowing leaf on the un-  
resting gale.

But when day is a magic thing, when Time begins  
anew,

When every clod is parted by Beauty breaking  
through, —

How can it be that you and I bring Love no offer-  
ing,

How can it be that frost should fall upon us in the  
Spring!



## PARADOX

I WENT out to the woods to-day  
To hide away from you,  
From you a thousand miles away —  
But you came, too.

And yet the old dull thought would stay,  
And all my heart benumb —  
If you were but a mile away  
You would not come.

## RETURN

You came again, but silence  
Had fallen on your heart,  
And in your eyes were visions  
That held us still apart.

And now I go on hearing  
The words you did not say,  
And the kiss you did not give me  
Burns on my lips to-day.

## DEFEAT

ALL the gifts I did not ask,  
Life came and brought to me,  
Until I stood amazed before  
Such prodigality.

And yet I failed in my one task,  
In my one enterprise, —  
I could not keep the fire alight  
Within your eyes.

## THE HOUR

You loved me for an hour  
Of all your careless days  
And then you went forgetting  
Down your own ways.

How could you know that Time  
would work  
A magic deed for me  
And fix that single hour  
For my eternity!

## WITH SONG-BIRDS

Love came to me so many times  
It grew a common thing,  
I thought that it would always come  
With song-birds in the Spring;

And so I dreamed and wondered  
What next year's love would be,  
Until one Spring there came no bird  
To any blossoming tree.

## THE RIVER

ONE sultry night a year ago  
You came and sat with me  
Where in the river breeze might blow  
The salt breath of the sea.

You never sought my hands or lips,  
There in the summer night,  
We only sat and watched the ships  
Shine with their double light;

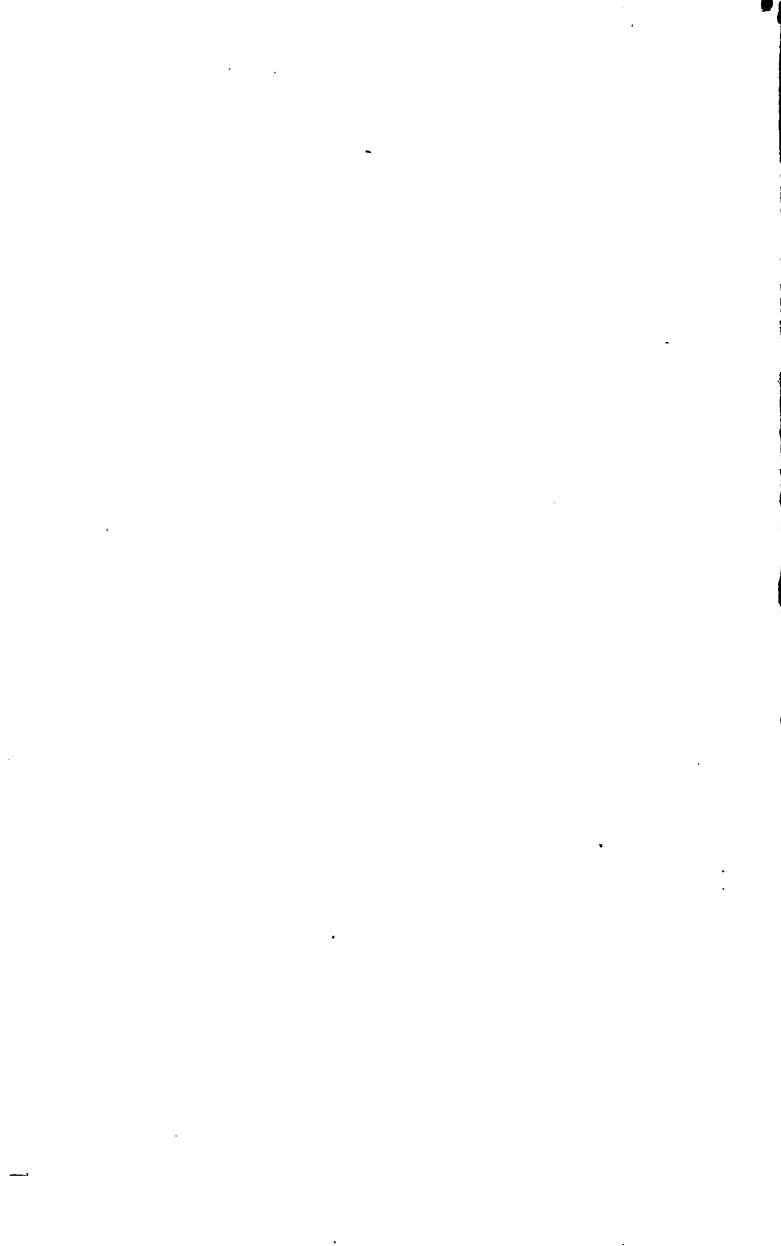
And spoke the careless words, we knew  
Would hide the memory  
Of all that I had been to you  
And you had been to me.

Then home from the dark river, swept  
By searchlights on the shore,  
And all that wakeful night I wept —  
For you I loved no more.

## EMBERS

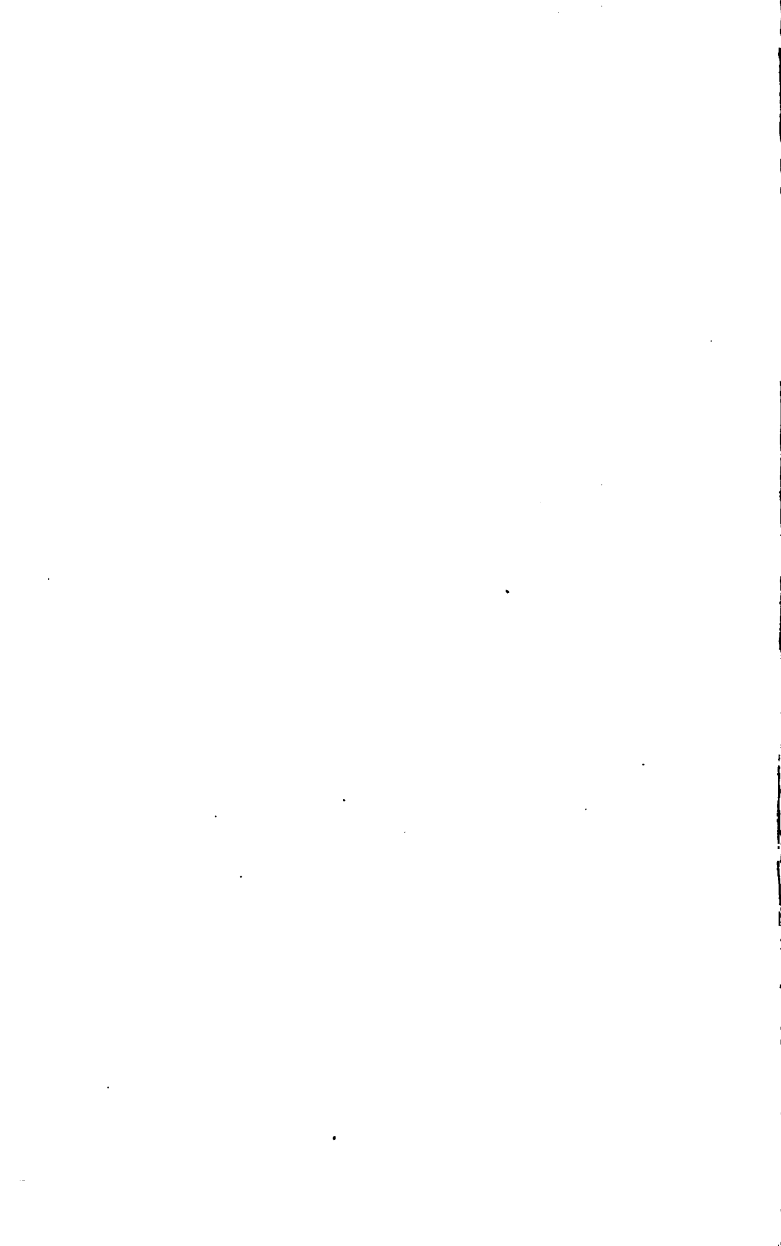
WHAT was once so quick and glowing,  
Leaping high in flame,  
Like a fire in night-wind blowing  
When you spoke my name, —

Smoulders now and scarce remembers  
How it burned — but mark,  
If you stir the whitening embers  
Still outleaps the spark!





[II]



## THE GHOST

A SCORE of years you had been lying  
In this spot,  
Yet I, to whom you were the dearest,  
Had seen it not.

And when to-day, by time emboldened,  
I looked upon the stone,  
'T was not your ghost that stood beside me,  
But my own.

## SEA-BIRDS

BIRDS that float upon a wave,  
Resting from the tiring air,  
Be the hopes that I would save  
From despair!

Menaced by the sky above,  
Menaced by the deep below,  
You rock as on the breast of Love,  
To and fro.

If immensities like these  
Cannot fright a thing so frail,  
I will keep my heart at ease  
In the gale!

## THE BELL-BUOY

THE far-off bell-buoy in the fog  
Keeps ringing momentarily,  
It does not sound to me at all  
Like wave-rung bells at sea ;

I only hear as it drifts in,  
Softened by spaces wide,  
The church-bells of my childhood ring  
Across the countryside.

## A SKIFF

A SKIFF upon the inland streams,  
And not a frigate on the sea,  
Is this, my heart, that drifts and dreams  
In sweet, alluring vagrancy.

Out there upon the main, I know,  
Brave galleons of thought set sail,  
And there the winds of fortune blow,  
And there the master hopes prevail ;

And oft insistently a tide  
Sets seaward in my restless heart,  
And I upon the deep would ride  
And in the traffic bear a part.

And yet what stays me, that I lie  
At morning by some green-fringed marge,  
And smile to see the schooner high,  
And smile to see the barge.

## A SKIFF

And know that they will reach the main  
League-lengths ahead of me,  
And bear their cargo home again,  
Ere I have dared the sea ?

## INLAND WATERS

INLAND waters by the sea,  
Sad in your tranquillity,  
How good if you could share the shock  
Of breakers beating on the rock ;  
How good if you could fly in spray  
On your rainbow wings away ;  
How good if sea-gulls on your breast,  
With wide wings dipping, came to rest !

How dull it is that you should stay  
Locked within your hills alway ;  
How sad it is you cannot know  
Great ships passing to and fro ;  
How calm the winds that bring no breath  
Of terror, danger, pain, and death ! —  
And yet how many lives must be  
Like inland waters by the sea.



## MY WAGE

I BARGAINED with Life for a penny,  
And Life would pay no more,  
However I begged at evening  
When I counted my scanty store ;

For Life is a just employer,  
He gives you what you ask,  
But once you have set the wages,  
Why, you must bear the task.

I worked for a menial's hire,  
Only to learn, dismayed,  
That any wage I had asked of Life,  
Life would have paid.

## WINDOWS

I LOOKED through others' windows  
On an enchanted earth,  
But out of my own window—  
Solitude and dearth.

And yet there is a mystery  
I cannot understand—  
That others through my window  
See an enchanted land.

## MYSELF

THEY look at me as if they knew me,  
All these people whom I meet,  
But to myself I am a stranger  
Passing in the street.

I meet the stranger's eyes with question  
Looking into mine,  
And with a sudden recognition  
We give a sign.

Then we are lost again, we mingle  
In the effacing crowd,  
And I forget those eyes that called me  
As though one spoke aloud, —

Until another signal moment  
Flashes identity,  
And in the maze of life, arrested,  
My soul looks out at me.

## THE DOME OF ST. LUKE'S HOSPITAL

ACROSS the street from me St. Luke's  
Towers gray and high,  
And my two windows frame the dome  
Lifting against the sky.

From Morningside the rising sun  
First lights the cross for me,  
And from Riverside the setting sun  
Lingers that I may see ;

While all day long a sculptured saint,  
Holding a mystic book,  
Turns from it to my window pane  
As straight as he can look.

The doves that house in every niche,  
Circle about his head,  
And on the hands that hold the book,  
Rest and are comforted.

## THE DOME OF ST. LUKE'S HOSPITAL

Now every week within those walls  
They tell me many die,  
And yet I only see the dome  
Lifting against the sky.

## CALVARY

I WALKED alone to my calvary,  
And no man carried the cross for me.  
Carried the cross? Nay, no man knew  
The fearful load that I bent unto,  
But each as we met upon the way  
Spoke me fair of the journey I walked  
that day.

I came alone to my calvary,  
And high was the hill and bleak to see,  
But lo, as I scaled its flinty side,  
A thousand went up to be crucified!  
A thousand kept the way with me,  
But never a cross my eyes could see.

## ANN TO DE QUINCEY

You questioned, all the restless years,  
Why I, who went from you with tears,  
Should not have come again to share  
Your nights of wandering vigil there.

You sought my face in every face  
In London streets, but found no trace  
Of her who gave you wine and bread  
And pillowed on her breast your head.

O blinded eyes, did you not see  
Because I loved I left you free?  
For Oxford Street to one outcast  
Must be stepmother to the last.

## THE FUNERAL BARGE

IN Venice once I saw a funeral barge,  
I had not dreamed death could so lovely be;  
Nor that one might in peace so utter calm  
Float to infinity.

Under a black-plumed canopy he lay,  
Upon a velvet dais, flower-sweet,  
Two boatmen rowed in silence at his head,  
Two boatmen at his feet.

And softer than a breast of feathered bird  
The great swan barge moved downward to the  
sea,  
While singers following made all the air  
Sweet with a threnody.

I watched them bear him seaward with a song,  
To rest at last his island bed upon,  
And in my heart, entranced with Death, I knew  
That isle was Avalon!



## WHITE PEACOCKS

TO SARA TEASDALE

ONCE at Isola Bella,  
    With sunset in the sky,  
We stood on the topmost terrace—  
    You and I.

Around us Lago Maggiore,  
    Incomparably fair,  
Gave back the hues of heaven  
    To the Italian air.

Then up the marble terrace,  
    Below the cypress trees,  
Came a flock of milk-white peacocks  
    With fans spread to the breeze.

Rose-pink on each outspread feather,  
    Rose-pink upon the crest —  
Never were birds in plumage  
    So ravishingly drest!

## THE DOOR OF DREAMS

Wherever we walked, they followed,  
Stately at our feet;  
No picture so enchanting  
Will any hour repeat.

And here in the murky city  
Those milk-white peacocks seem  
To follow and follow me ever,  
Like ghosts of a haunting dream.

[III]



## THE DESERT ROSE

“ Who, passing through the valley of Baca, make it a well.”

I THOUGHT, dear heart, that we had gone  
Too far beneath the desert sun  
To breathe again that flower of flowers,  
That bloom of blooms in one.

But now I see — oh, miracle  
Of Very Love that cannot fail! —  
That two who through the desert pass  
Shall make of it a well;

And on its brink shall flowers spring  
For their eternal comforting,  
And from parched skies a singing bird  
Shall light and dip its wing!

## FREEDOM

Be free of me as any bird  
That circles in the air,  
Be free of me as any cloud  
That mountain summits wear;

Be free as any wandering wind  
That blows across the sea,  
Be free as any restless wave  
That moves continually

For freest things must tire of flight,  
And restless things must rest,  
And all the lonesome winds will drive  
You to my breast!

## JOY

Now I can sing of happy things  
And let the sad world go its way,  
Since you have spoken words that turn  
The night to day.

Now I can sow beside all streams  
And care not if another reap,  
Since all that I would garner here  
Is mine to keep.

Now I can scatter joy about  
Like green young leaves that fall in  
spring,  
Because the tree is all too rich  
In bourgeoning !

## WHEN YOU GO

WHEN you go, a hush falls  
Over all my heart,  
And in a trance of my own dreams  
I move apart.

When you go, the street grows  
Like a vacant place—  
What if a million faces pass  
If not your face?

When you go, my life stops  
Like ships becalmed at sea,  
And waits the breath from heaven  
that blows  
You back to me.



## A SEA-CHANGE

ONCE in a year of wonder  
I brought to you a dream,  
And all your waves gave back to me  
Only its gleam.

But now I come again, O Sea,  
Under a changing sky,  
And all your waves lie gray and still  
As dreams that die.

## THE END

LET us cease now ; it is too late to wonder  
That love should prove a mortal thing at last,  
Or that corrosive Time at length should sunder  
That which was bound so fast.

Let us cease now ; it is too late for weeping,  
It is too late to stay what would be gone.  
Sometime the caged thing will escape its keeping  
And leave but emptiness to ponder on.

Let us cease now, and without indecision.  
That all is lost, there is no room for doubt—  
We were not great enough for Love, the Vision,  
And love, the flame, has swept us and burnt out !

## THE ANGEL OF THE SWORD

THE angel with the flaming sword  
Has shut me out from heaven's gate,  
And I may not reënter there,  
Though long I wait ;

And yet, O Angel of the Sword,  
I do not grudge the thrust you deal,  
For still the keenest pain of wounds  
Is that wounds heal !

## THE AVOWAL

If I had told you not,  
Then might you still to me  
Be my soul's secret fane,  
My dream, my mystery.

But now a word has rent  
The temple veil apart,  
And shown me that the secret fane  
Is empty — as my heart.

## RELEASE

WHAT can you care, forgetful Time,  
Who drop all sweet things by the way,  
How long this voice within my heart  
Should call to me, and stay?

So loose me, Time, and let me go,  
No longer to old dreams a thrall —  
Yet with what dream shall I replace  
That sweetest dream of all?

## INTERLUDE

**OFTEN** in fear, Belovéd,  
I think that it is gone,  
This love that made our days and nights  
A hope to dream upon.

And then in some wonderful moment  
It springs again to flower,  
And you and I are re-living  
That first great hour!

## VALUES

O LOVE, could I but take the hours  
That once I spent with thee,  
And coin them all in minted gold,  
What should I purchase that would hold  
Their worth in joy to me?  
Ah, Love, — another hour with thee!

## THE GHOSTLY GALLEY

WHEN comes the ghostly galley  
Whose rowers dip the oar  
Without a sound to startle us,  
Unheeding on the shore, —

If they should beckon you aboard  
Before they beckon me,  
How could I bear the waiting time  
Till I should put to sea!



[IV]



## THE COAT OF MAIL

To-DAY came word incredible —  
That one whom I love passing well,  
One dear as my own soul to me,  
Must meet the dark extremity,  
And weeks alone might keep alight  
That spirit battling with the night.

What can I say to one who goes  
Foredoomed to fall before his foes?  
Mock him with hope that he may be  
More valiant than his enemy?  
Commend to him the shield of trust,  
Invulnerable to every thrust?

No, in these days supreme and few  
Leave him to forge an armor new;  
For he alone, by day, by night,  
Can weld the burnished links aright  
Till at the last he shall prevail,  
Clad in his spirit's coat of mail.

## TO ONE DYING IN WAR-TIME

You hear the marching of their feet,  
You know your comrades go to war,  
You know that you will never march  
To music, more.

You lie and dream through waning hours  
Of soldiers splendid in array,  
And how the bugles must be calling  
At break of day.

You think how gladly you would go  
To where the fight is heaviest,  
But weariness is on you now,  
And you must rest.

Yet do not grieve, O stricken heart,  
A keener bugle yet shall blow,  
And in the march of nobler hosts  
Your feet shall go!

## SONGS TO ONE PASSING

### I

Your wistful eyes that day you left,  
They haunt me all the night,  
I never saw in any eyes  
So mystical a light.

I knew the day you went from me  
That you would come no more,  
And yet I said the casual words  
That I had said before.

If only then I had been true  
And held you in my arms,  
And shielded you a moment's space  
From death's alarms!

### II

The world of careless people  
It will not even know

## THE DOOR OF DREAMS

The day your lonely spirit  
Is called to go;

Nor all the months of exile,  
Lying on your bed,  
That you have heard the wings of death  
Hovering overhead.

To all the careless people  
Who hurry to and fro  
That day will be as other days —  
But I shall know.

### III

I cannot sing, words mock me so.  
I cannot sing, I only know  
That you are lying far from me,  
Almost within the Mystery.

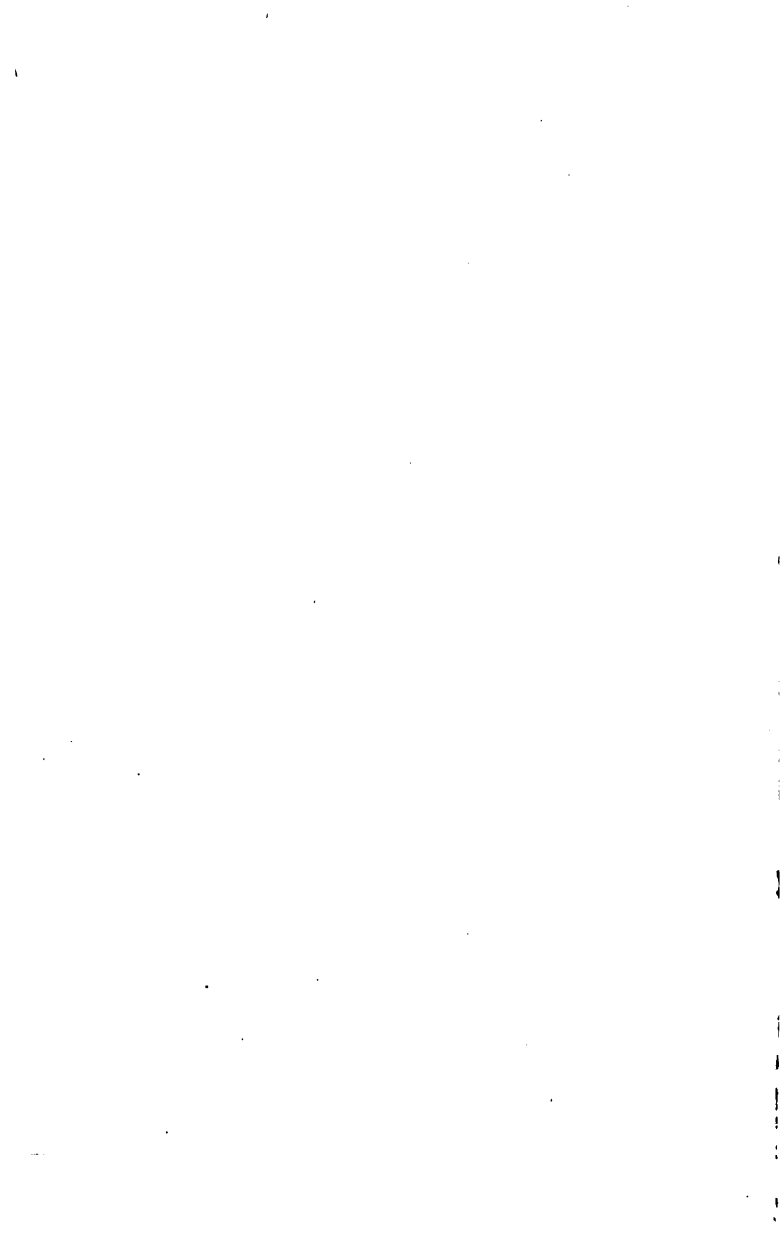
I only wonder what you think  
As you draw nearer to the brink,  
I only wonder whose the hand  
Will welcome you to that strange land.

## SONGS TO ONE PASSING

### IV

I send no message to you now,  
There are no words to say,  
I would not grieve you by a thought  
Before you go away;

But thoughts of mine already fledge  
Themselves for farther flight,  
And they will meet you when you come  
Within The Light!





[V]



## A NIGHTINGALE AT FRESNOY

NEVER, they say, were guns so loud,  
Never were flames so bright,  
As those that made at Fresnoy  
Inferno of the night ;

And when the searchlight fires lit  
The slender, new-green trees,  
They could be seen to tremble  
As never in a breeze.

At Fresnoy in the little wood  
Just greening with the spring,  
A nightingale, undaunted,  
Lifted his voice to sing ;

And in each moment's silence  
When torn earth held her breath,  
Before the fearful guns again  
Uttered their Song of Death, —

## THE DOOR OF DREAMS

The nightingale, oblivious  
Of all the ghastly strife,  
Was heard within the little wood  
To sing the Song of Life!

## TO POETS WHO FALL IN BATTLE

You who go to battle,  
Careless of eclipse,  
And quaff Death like a beaker  
Brimming to the lips, —

You who seek in battle  
Things that cannot fail,  
And raise this brimming beaker  
As if it were the Grail, —

Thanks to you who show me  
What the soul can be!  
God speed to you, brothers,  
And a glad eternity!

**“I HAVE NO LOVER ON THE  
BATTLEFIELD”**

I HAVE no lover on the battlefield,  
I do not go with sickening fear at heart,  
And when the crier calls the latest horror  
I do not start.

I have no lover on the battlefield,  
I am exempt from terror of the night,  
I can lie down, serene and unregarding,  
Until the light.

But on the battlefield had I a lover,  
How life would purge itself of petty pain,  
And what would matter all the petty losses,  
The petty gain?  
I should be one with those who suffer greatly,  
With pain all pain above,  
And I should know then, beyond peradventure,  
The heart of Love!

## PATRINS

*You know, dear, that the gipsies strew  
Some broken boughs along the way  
To mark the trail for one who comes,  
A tardy pilgrim of the day.*

*And so my songs, that have no worth  
Save that best worth of being true,  
Are but as patrins strewn to show  
The way I came in loving you.*

**“I HAVE NO LOVER ON THE  
BATTLEFIELD”**

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How life would purge itself of petty pain,  
And what would matter all the petty losses,  
The petty gain?  
I should be one with those who suffer greatly,  
With pain all pain above,  
And I should know then, beyond peradventure,  
The heart of Love!

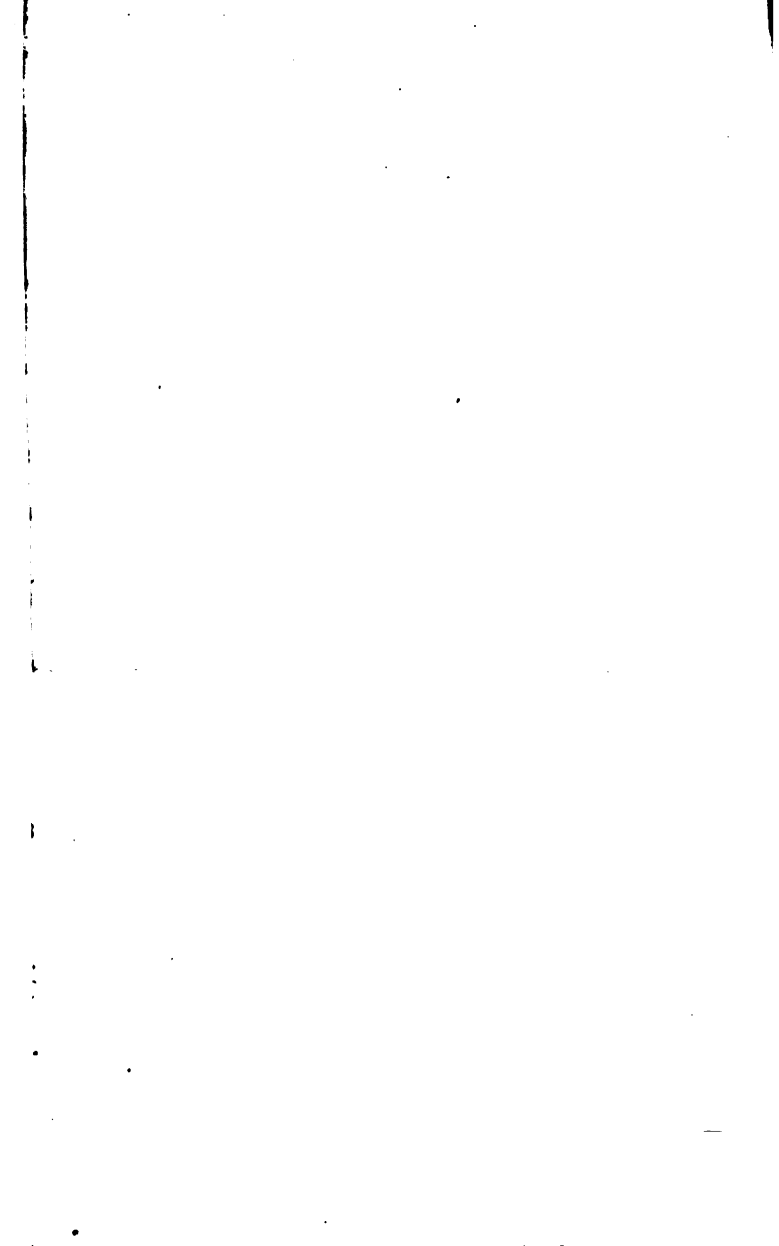


## PATRINS

*You know, dear, that the gipsies strew  
Some broken boughs along the way  
To mark the trail for one who comes,  
A tardy pilgrim of the day.*

*And so my songs, that have no worth  
Save that best worth of being true,  
Are but as patrins strewn to show  
The way I came in loving you.*

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